

*Banashree*. I spotted a heron feeding and it took off as I raised my glasses and flew slowly in front of me. I had no hesitation in exclaiming 'Goliath heron', but checked myself at the thought that I had never heard of it in the Sunderbans area.

On my return to Calcutta I consulted Finn (cannot remember title) and found that Goliath herons had appeared in Calcutta market in 1845-46. I was later able to consult the HANDBOOK and found that the Goliath heron had last been recorded in 1925 in the Khulna Sunderbans (now in Bangladesh), only a few miles from where I found it.

The HANDBOOK describes the Goliath heron as essentially an African species, and a rare vagrant to India. Apart from the records in the Calcutta market and the Khulna Sunderbans already mentioned, Hume saw six gigantic herons near Multan in 1873 which were probably Goliaths, Blanford saw one near Nagpur and one in Baluchistan, and Stuart Baker saw five on the Meghna near Dacca in 1910. Ceylon has records in 1878 and 1879 but not since.

It seems probable that the Goliath heron is regularly to be found in the Sunderbans area, and the lack of reports is solely due to the absence of knowledgeable bird watchers. The great size and fine plumage resembling a brighter coloured Purple heron are distinctive.

1100, MORGES,  
SWITZERLAND,  
May 30, 1974.

PETER F. R. JACKSON

#### 8. ? THE LITTLE GULL, *LARUS MINUTUS* PALLAS, IN KUTCH

On visits to the Great Rann of Kutch in April 1956, April 1957, March 1960, and again as recently as January 1974, I observed rather distant flocks of a puzzling gull which it struck me at the time could, by all the rules of the game, be no other than the Little Gull, *Larus minutus* Pallas. I did not publish this earlier in view of the extreme paucity of records of this species in the Indian subcontinent (a single specimen from Ladakh, and a possible sighting in Bombay Harbour--INDIAN HANDBOOK 3: 37), and lack of positive conviction on my own part. However, on the latest visit to the Rann (23/24 January 1974) I was able to watch a fairly large flock sufficiently closely to support my earlier conjecture, though confirmation must still await a specimen. At first the birds, which were in winter plumage, looked like winter

Blackheaded Gulls (*L. ridibundus*), but their comparatively diminutive size was immediately distinctive, as also the absence of any black in the primaries. The blackish bill suggested Gullbilled Tern (*Gelochelidon nilotica*), but the white tail was not forked as in the latter. The blackish underwing, tern-like flight (with rapid wing-flapping) and habit of flicking food off the water surface--and of course the small size for a gull—are the points on which my tentative identification rests. What other species it *can* be is difficult to guess!

46, PALI HILL, BANDRA,  
BOMBAY 400 050,  
May 27, 1974.

SÁLIM ALI

#### 9. WHITECHEEKED TERN *STERNA REPRESSA* HARTERT IN BOMBAY

On 26th June 1973 a tern with one leg almost completely missing below the tarsal joint was brought to me by a local boy who had picked it up on the beach. Though the wound appeared to have healed the bird died within a few hours, no doubt due to other causes, and I sent it to the Bombay Natural History Society where Mr Humayun Abdulali has identified it as *Sterna repressa* Hartert.

This species is known to nest on the Vengurla Rocks off Ratnagiri, southern Maharashtra, but this is the first record from the Bombay neighbourhood. I referred to the Regional Meteorological Centre, Colaba, Bombay to know the prevailing weather conditions and was informed that from 24th to 26th June there was no stormy weather but a northwesterly wind with a speed of 5 to 10 knots prevailed.

The primaries and tail are both in moult but the black cap on the head precludes its being an immature.

SIR MOHAMUD YUSUF TRUST,  
C. I. CAMPUS,  
NHAVA via PANVEL, KOLABA DISTRICT,  
MAHARASHTRA,  
July 26, 1973.

PRABHAKARA MENON